



18 APR 96

TIMES PAST STARMAN



STARMAN • THE MIST FIRST JOUST

JAMES ROBINSON • JOHN WATKISS



HARRIS 96

It was Autumn.

I think it was, anyway.

Yes, now I recall those small trees which line the avenues of little Canton in the Alleys. The pavement there was slippery with the leaves that had fallen.

I was in Opal at that time, and yet distracted by bright costumes in other cities. Garrick Flash had begun his zipping and zooming and I had begun to think that perhaps this smiling Hermes might be fine sport.

And a brief flicker of honor, or duty, or whatever damned emotion it was, took me back to England for a time. A masked American aviator who flew with the RAF needed my assistance.

Captain X.

He had a filthy sense of humor and he was a terrible card player, but his heart was pure and together we fought Hitler's spies on London's streets.

Oh, and a bizarre man-monster that German science had created. I almost forgot that.

(I know, I know, I know that prior I've written of leaving England in 1891 never to return. But my patriotism is not something I take pride in, so often times I choose to forget my wartime return to London's dirt and gray.)

But what I write today is not of me and then.

This is of Ted Knight in that time.

Green and red and bright in the darkness and now to everything.

And this is of his enemy, too. His archenemy...

And their first time together.

ANY DEAD?

SOME.

THE GAS COMPOUND THE THIEVES USED WAS A STRANGE ONE.

MOST OF THE VICTIMS ARE JUST SLEEPING. EXCEPT THOSE THAT DRANK BRANDY. FOR SOME REASON THE GAS KILLED THEM.

DO YOU KNOW WHO DID THIS?

THE MIST. NEW NAME IN TOWN.

BODY MADE OF GAS. ONLY HEAD AND ARMS VISIBLE. QUITE A SIGHT.

First Goult

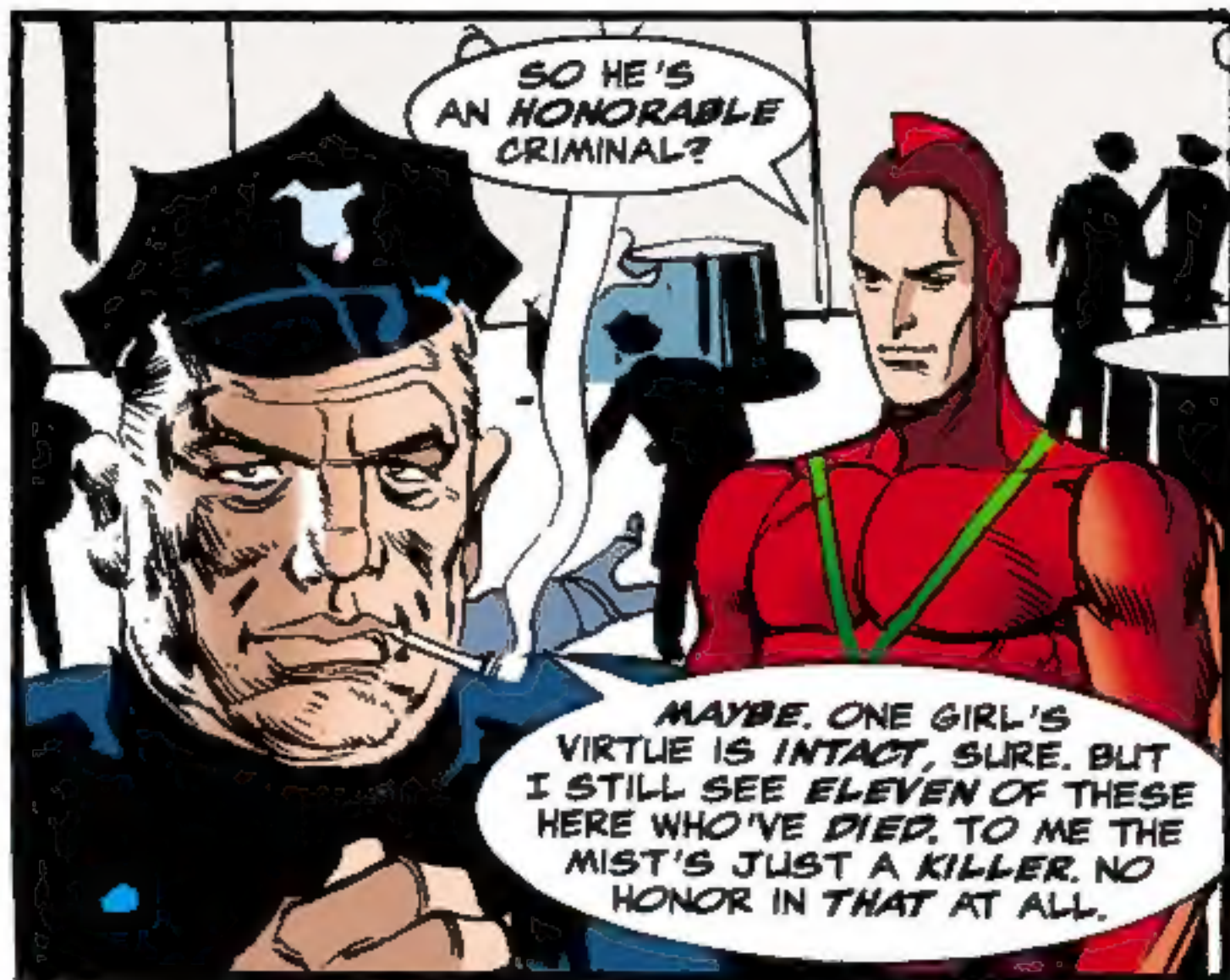
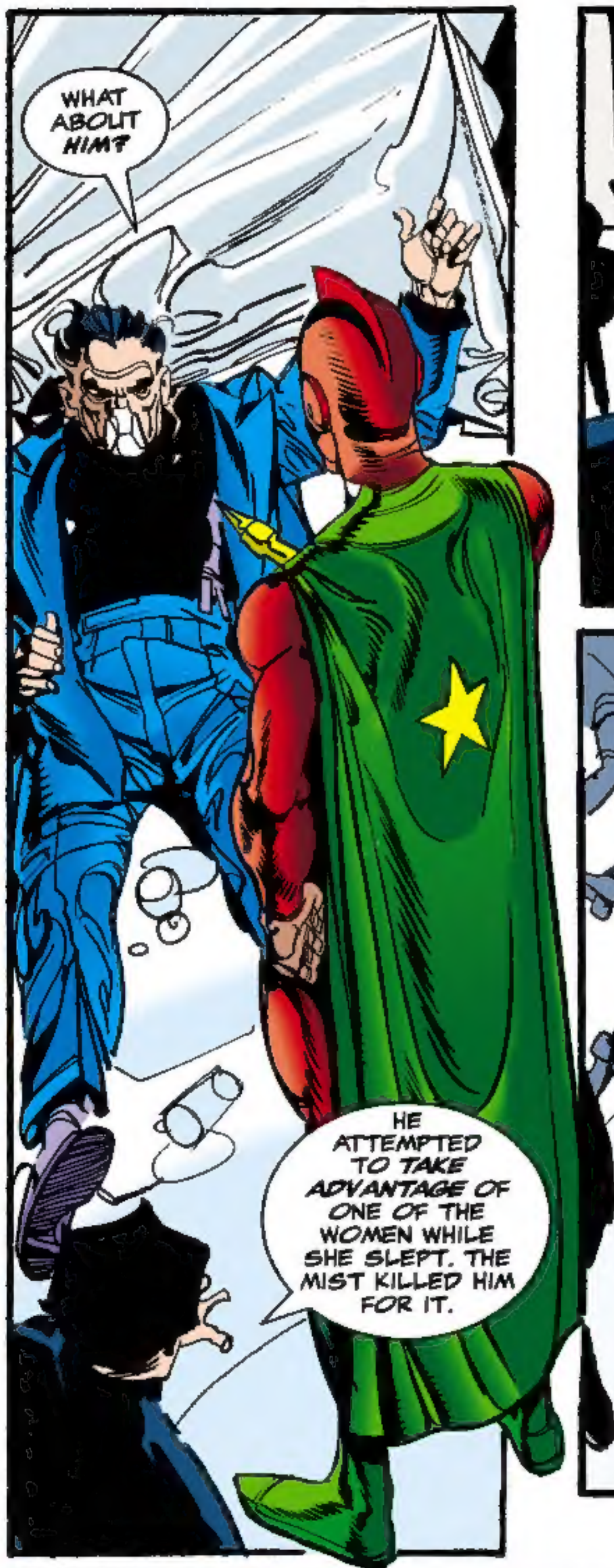
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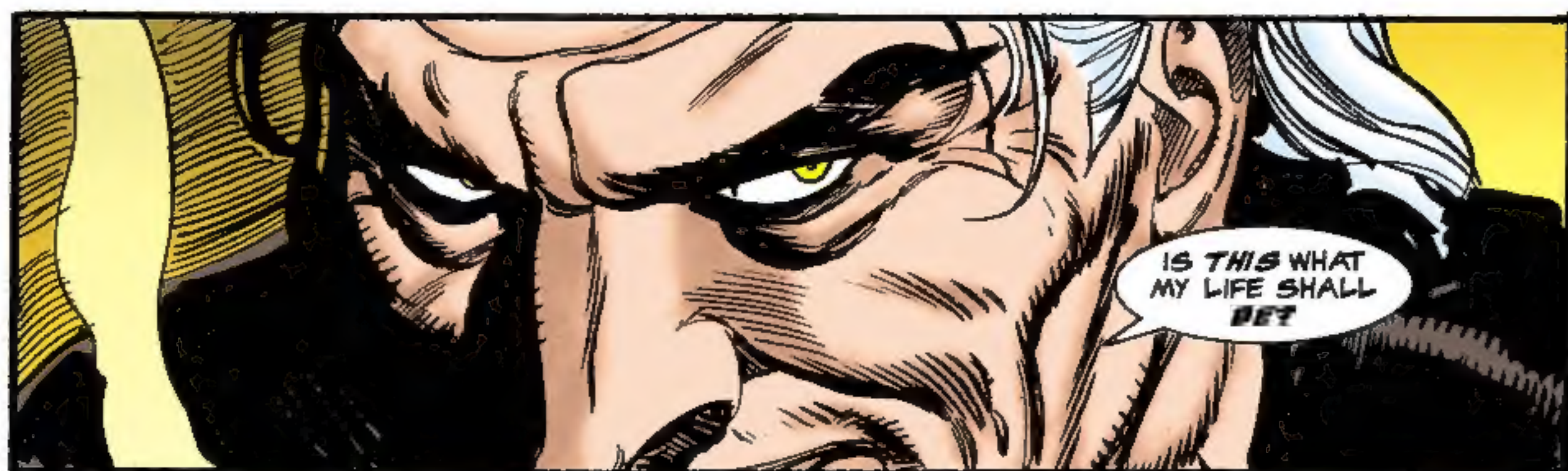
HENCHMEN?

FOUR OR FIVE.

THAT WAS ALL IT TOOK TO LOOT THE JEWELRY FROM EVERYONE. NO RESISTANCE AFTER ALL.







IS THIS WHAT
MY LIFE SHALL
BE?

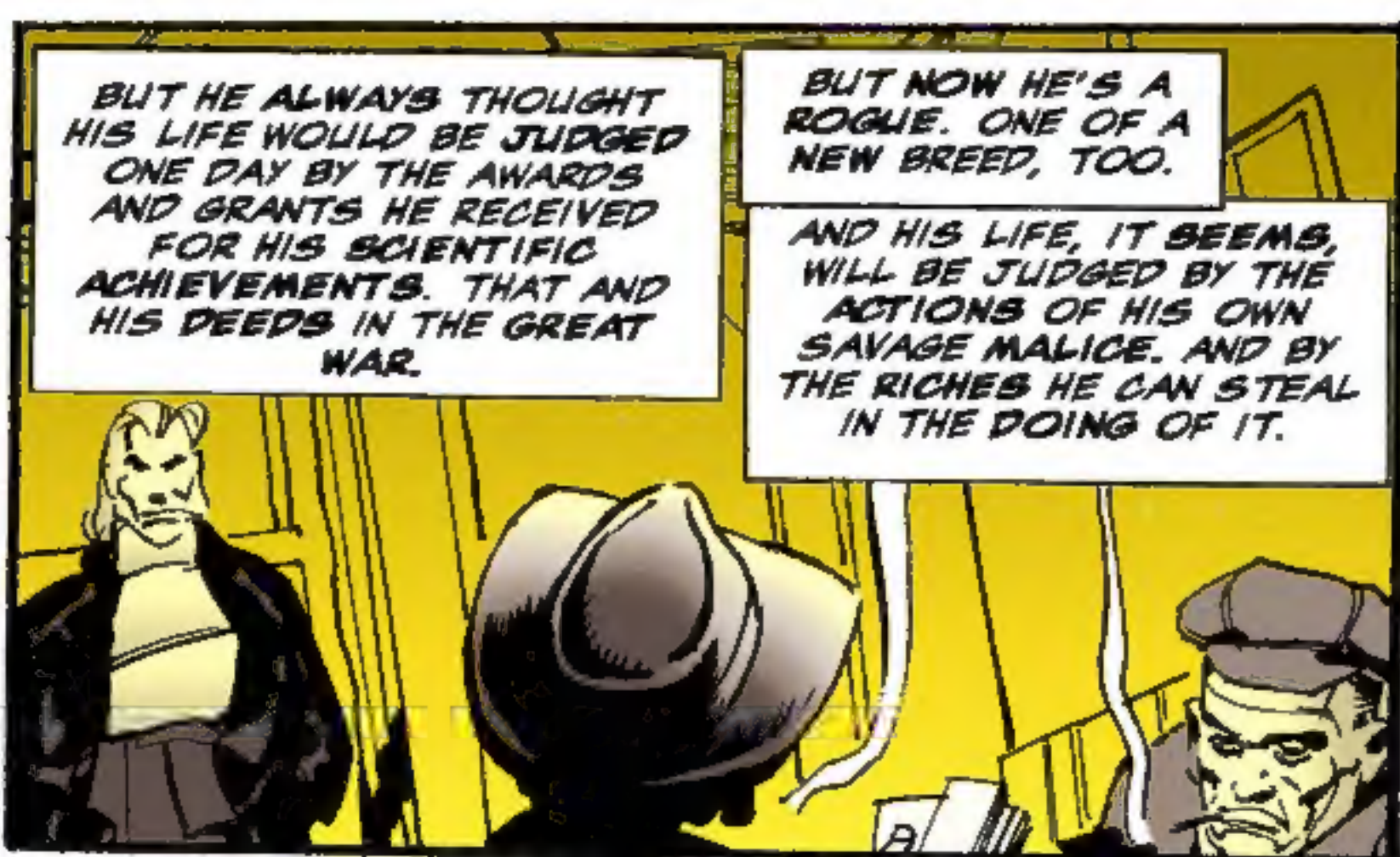


WHAT?

NOTHING.
THINKING ALOUD.
KEEP SORTING THE
LOOT.

"IS THIS MY
LIFE TO BE?"

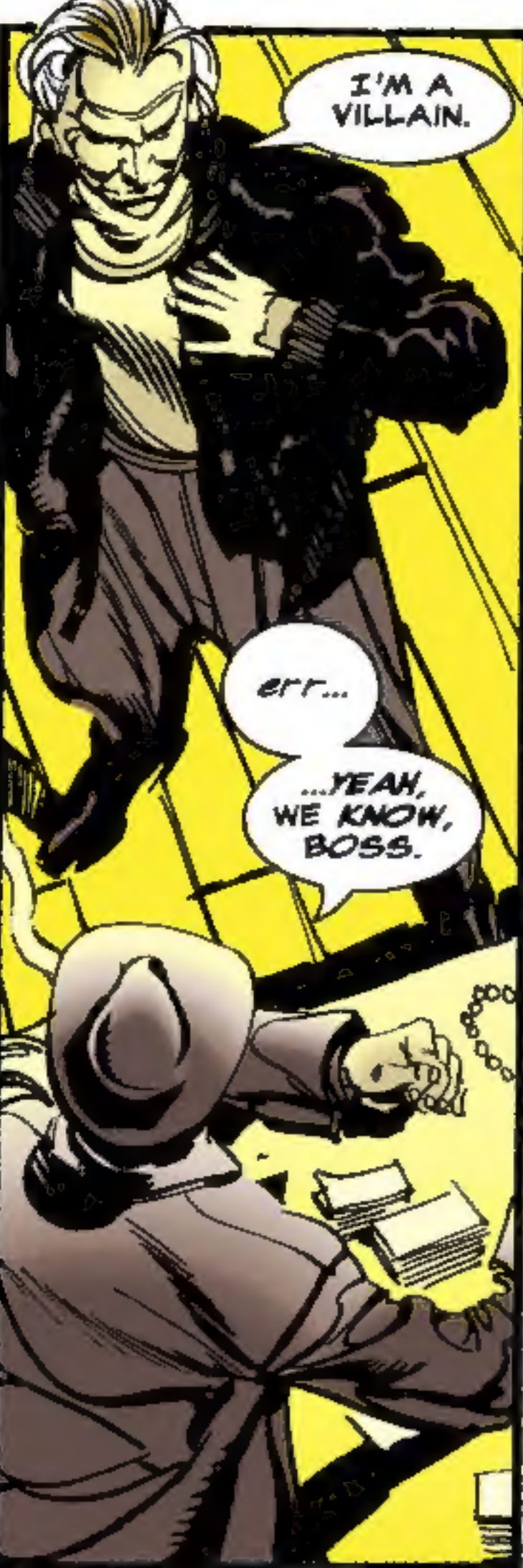
HE THINKS IT THIS
TIME. IF HIS
THOUGHTS WERE
KNOWN, THEY
MIGHT BE
PERCEIVED BY HIS
MEN AS
WEAKNESS. AND
HE IS FAR FROM
WEAK.



BUT HE ALWAYS THOUGHT
HIS LIFE WOULD BE JUDGED
ONE DAY BY THE AWARDS
AND GRANTS HE RECEIVED
FOR HIS SCIENTIFIC
ACHIEVEMENTS. THAT AND
HIS DEEDS IN THE GREAT
WAR.

BUT NOW HE'S A
ROGUE. ONE OF A
NEW BREED, TOO.

AND HIS LIFE, IT SEEMS,
WILL BE JUDGED BY THE
ACTIONS OF HIS OWN
SAVAGE MALICE. AND BY
THE RICHES HE CAN STEAL
IN THE DOING OF IT.



I'M A
VILLAIN.

err...

...YEAH,
WE KNOW,
BOSS.



I'M NOT
SURE THAT I
DID.



NOT UNTIL
THIS MOMENT,
ANYWAY.



QUICKLY.
QUICKLY.

IT MAY BE
LATE, AND THE DOOR
MAY BE LOCKED AND THE
SHUTTERS DRAWN AND
BANKING HOURS JUST
ENDED. INDEED, IT MAY BE
ALL THOSE THINGS.

BUT WE DON'T HAVE
STEALTH. NOT LIKE AT A NIGHT
CLUB, WE DON'T. NOT LIKE DEAD OF
NIGHT WOULD AFFORD US.



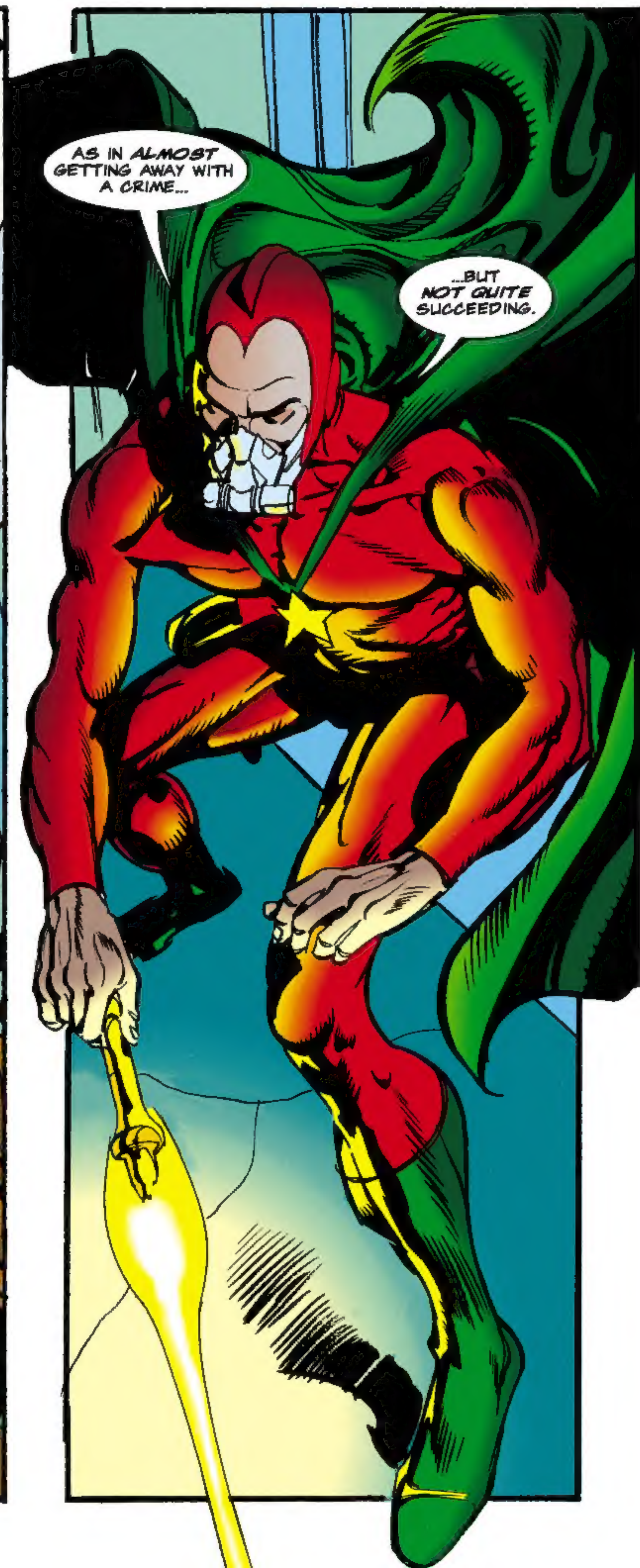
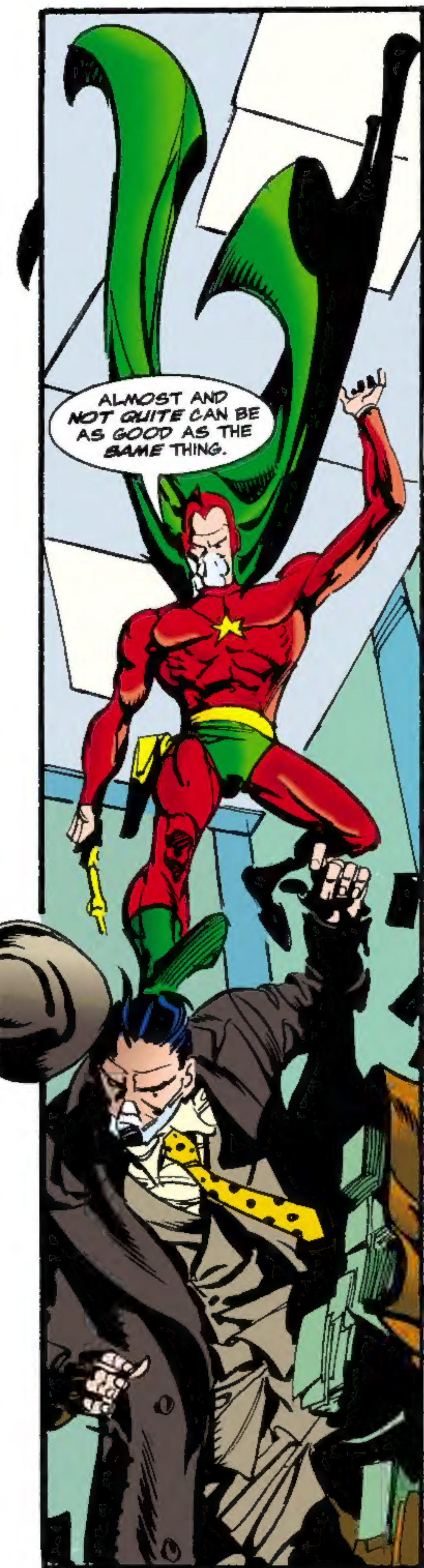
LARGE
BILLS. LARGE
BONDS. NOTHING
SMALL.

SMALL ISN'T
WORTH THE TIME IT
TAKES.



GOT IT,
BOSS. LARGE.

LESS TO CARRY
AND MORE TO SPEND.
DON'T WORRY, WE'VE
ALMOST GOTTEN
ALL--





KILL--

GET HIM!

IS THIS THE BEST YOU COULD FIND, MIST? IF SO, THEY'D BETTER BE SERVING YOU OUT OF LOVE AND LOYALTY.

IF YOU'RE BUYING THEIR AID, THEN IT'S YOU WHO'S BEING ROBBED.

FINISHED WITH THE WORDS OF ADVICE, STARMAN?

THEN LOOK OVER HERE.

ELMO ISN'T ONE OF MY PRETTIEST HELPERS. BUT I REALLY DON'T THINK HIS APPEARANCE WILL BE HELPED BY YOU PUNCHING HIS FACE.

NOR WILL THIS GIRL'S LIFE-SPAN. BELIEVE ME, HIT ELMO AND YOU'LL HATE YOURSELF FOR WHAT I'LL DO IN RETALIATION.

INSTEAD, WHY DON'T YOU, MY GOOD LITTLE MYSTERY MAN, DO AS YOU'RE TOLD...

...AND REMOVE YOUR GAS MASK.



GO ON! I COUNT TO TEN AND THEN--

SPARE ME THE THEATRICS, MIST. HERE, THE GAS MASK'S OFF. I'LL LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS AND THEN YOU CAN KILL ME AND BE ON YOUR WAY.

AT LEAST THEN I WON'T HAVE TO LOOK AT YOUR UGLYYYYYYYYY!!





The Mist had him, then



Fair and square and in his
sights.

He could have used his blade to cut
Starmán up and down this way
and that.

He didn't.

Why?

I don't know. I'll
never know

They became archfoes. Hated
enemies. There wasn't a year
for the next three decades
that these two wouldn't
meet in battle.

It could all have been avoided
with one stroke of the knife.

Starmán awoke with the
others who were drugged.

The Mist, of course, long gone.



HOW
DID YOU
KNOW TO GO
THERE?

TIP.
STOOLIE. HE
HEARD A WHISPER. I
EXTRAPOLATED
FROM THAT.

BIT OF A
DETECTIVE,
huh?

I'M A
THINKER. THAT'S
ALL. I'M NO RED
BAILEY.



SO NOW?
WHAT

I AM A
BEACON OF
LIGHT IN THE
DARKNESS. A
BEACON FOR
THOSE WHO
HAVE NEED
OF ME.

BUT THERE
ARE OTHERS
WHO PREFER THE
DARK. THOSE
WHOSE HEARTS
AND DEEPS MATCH
IT'S BLACKNESS.
THEY FEAR MY
LIGHT...MY
POWER.

I'LL USE
THAT FEAR, AND
MAYBE...JUST MAYBE
I'LL GET
ANSWERS.

HEY, ONE
THING I DID
PICK UP, WHEN I
WAS ASKING
AROUND. A
NAME. WILSON
MAY KNOW
IT?

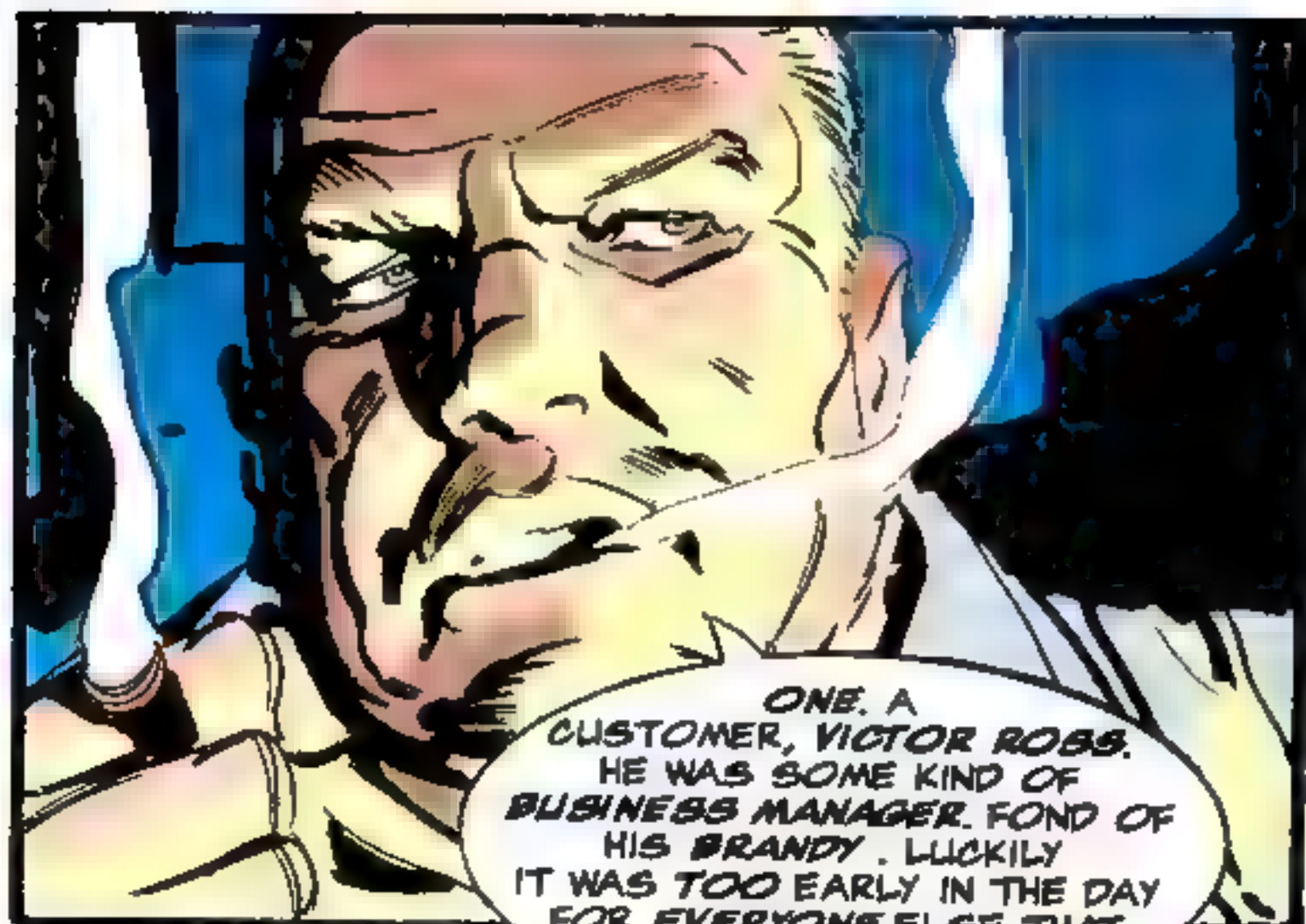
NO.

WELL, I'VE
HEARD OF IT, BUT
I CAN'T QUITE
THINK WHERE.

I'LL
LOOK INTO
IT.

AND WHILE
YOU'RE AT IT,
I'D LIKE A LIST
OF THOSE WHO
DIED IN THE
NIGHT CLUB.

ANY
DEATHS THIS
TIME, BY THE
WAY?



ONE. A CUSTOMER, VICTOR ROSS. HE WAS SOME KIND OF BUSINESS MANAGER. FOND OF HIS BRANDY. LUCKILY IT WAS TOO EARLY IN THE DAY FOR EVERYONE ELSE THAT BREATHED THE GAS.

WE'LL TALK SOON.



I suppose I should mention something here. Something about Ted Knight.

This world... full of costumes and powers, seems to sometimes overlook the "detective hero" for where you have the ability to level a building, what need is there to solve a puzzle?

Indeed the world problems seem now one great Gordian Knot, easier to hack in half than to solve the untangling of

But there have always been the crime-fighting sleuths. Some costumed, some not. Gotham dark champion is today's prime example. Ralph Digby too I suppose



I recall in the '50s, a western private detective, Sierra Smith made headlines for a year. He trailed a mad dog killer through five states, using clues and cunning. The ending to the chase involved jet-fighters and rodeo clowns and a lot of post-atomic craziness, which the media loved to be sure. And Smith's daring overshadowed his superb feats of deduction by the adventure's finale. Overlooked by everyone but me.

The '50s also had Roy Raymond. And the green Martian, back when he wore a trench-coat and a human face.

And of course the '40s had Wesley Dodds and his woman.

But Ted Knight, an inventor used to solving the puzzles of science, many times used those same skills to solve puzzles made by man. It took time. At first he was no Holmes. Nor even a Watson. But slowly his talents grew.

Oh, and in those days, Ted was a more physical costumed mysteryman than one might think seeing the gentle scholar of now.

Indeed. For more physical...



WILSON
MAY'S ART IS
DRAWING QUITE
SOME ATTEN-
TION.

YES, NOW I
RECALL READING ABOUT
IT IN THE NEWSPAPERS. I
WAS CERTAIN I KNEW
HIS NAME FROM
SOMEWHERE.

AND YOU WANTED
TO EXHIBIT HIM, MR.
DOONIE? THEN WHY
DIDN'T YOU?



THAT'S
RIGHT. I NEED
INSIDE INFORMA-
TION. THE OPAL CITY
ART WORLD. WHO
LOVES WHO. WHO
HATES WHO. HOW
AND WHY.
WHERE--

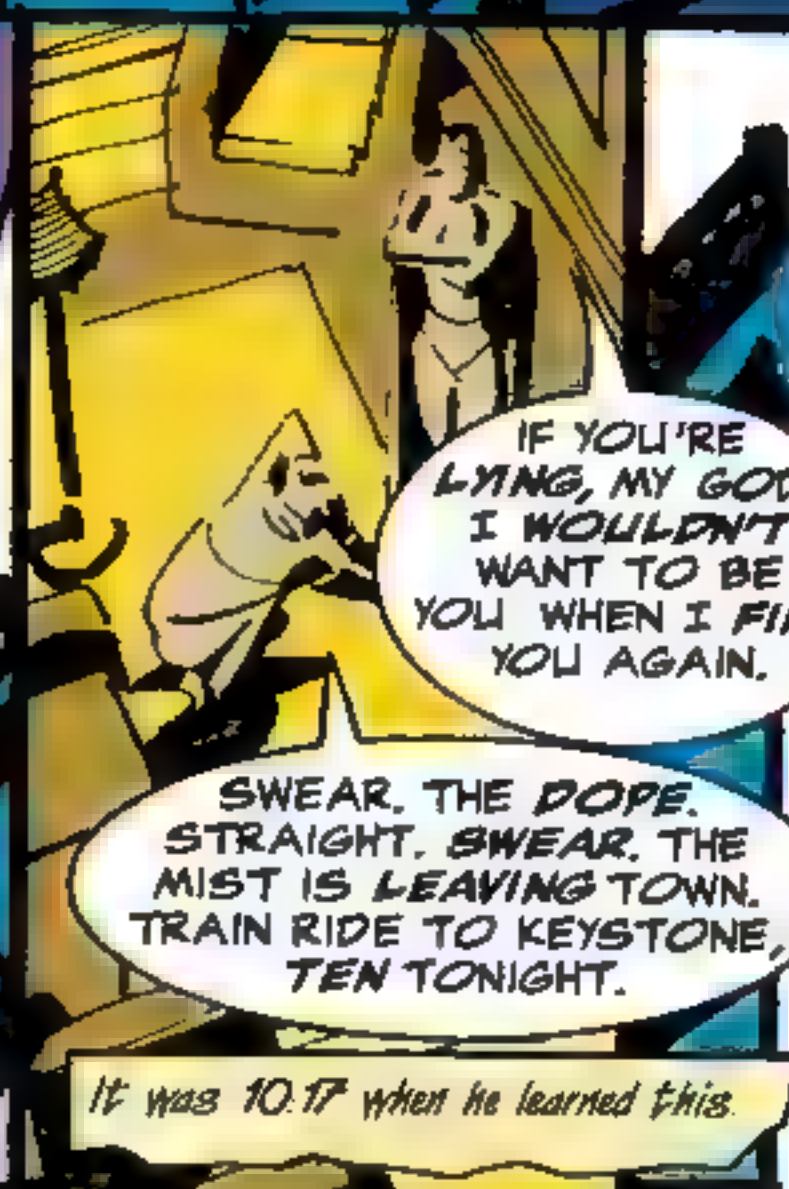
AND
WHEN.

FOR
AN EXCLUSIVE
STORY IF YOU GET
TO THE BOTTOM
OF IT?

YOU
HAVE A DEAL,
MAYHEW.



I'VE
GOT IT.



IF YOU'RE
LYING, MY GOD,
I WOULDN'T
WANT TO BE
YOU WHEN I FIND
YOU AGAIN.

SWEAR, THE DOPE.
STRAIGHT, SWEAR, THE
MIST IS LEAVING TOWN.
TRAIN RIDE TO KEYSTONE,
TEN TONIGHT.

It was 10:17 when he learned this.

By then The Mist must have settled back in his private compartment, content and sure of his escape

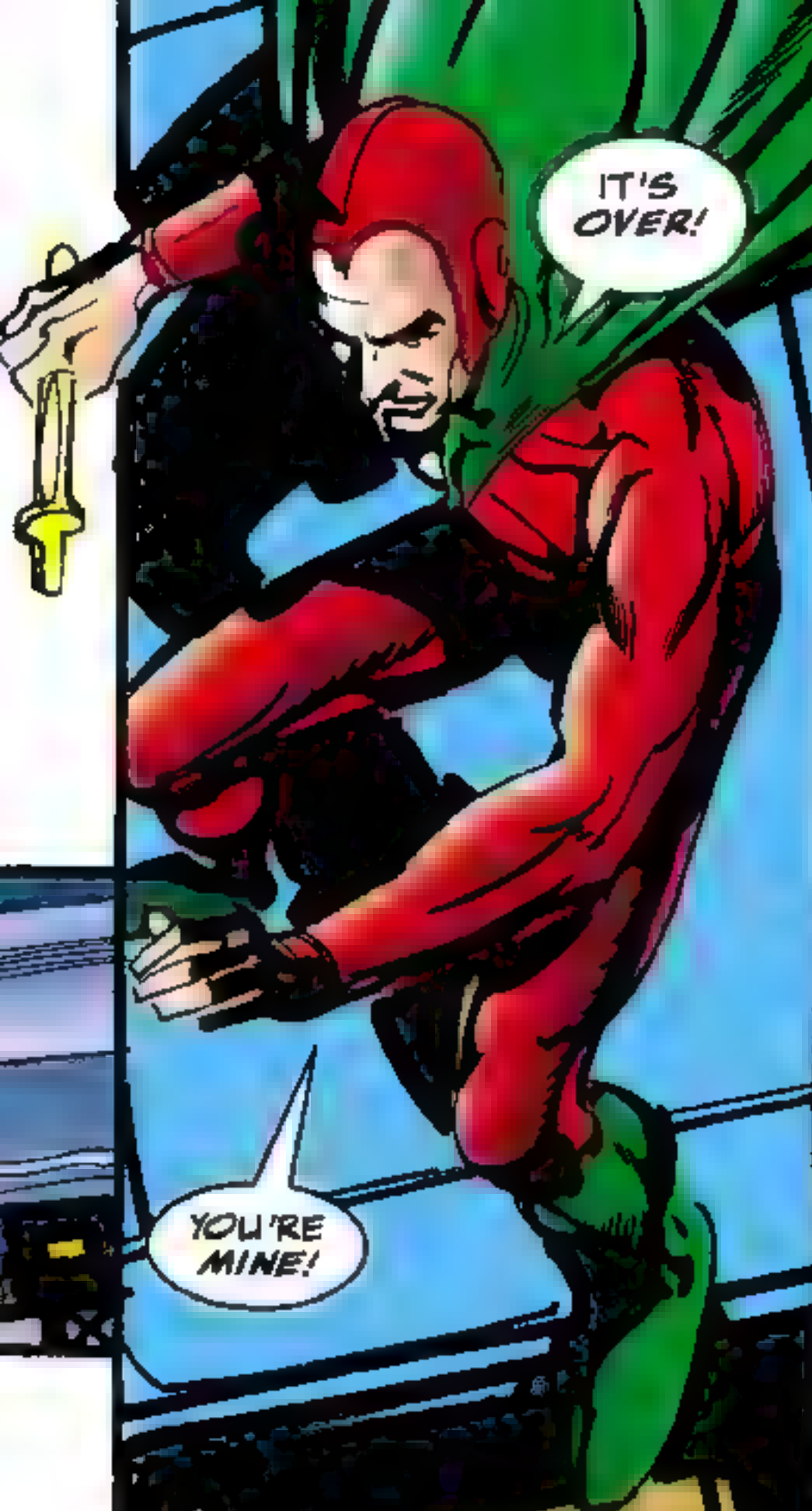
I like to imagine the soothing chug of the train and the motion of the tracks and the feeling of satisfaction that only a successful crimewave can bring... lulling the Mist to quiescence His eyes half-closed perhaps. A smile playing on his lips

And then I like to imagine the look on his face when he glanced out the window...

and he saw what he saw

NO!





IT'S OVER!

YOU'RE MINE!



NOT OVER.
I WON'T STAND TRIAL.
I WON'T BE JUDGED BY
YOUR KIND.

BUT YOU'VE
NOWHERE TO RUN...

...NOWHERE
TO GO!



OH,
YES, I
HAVE.

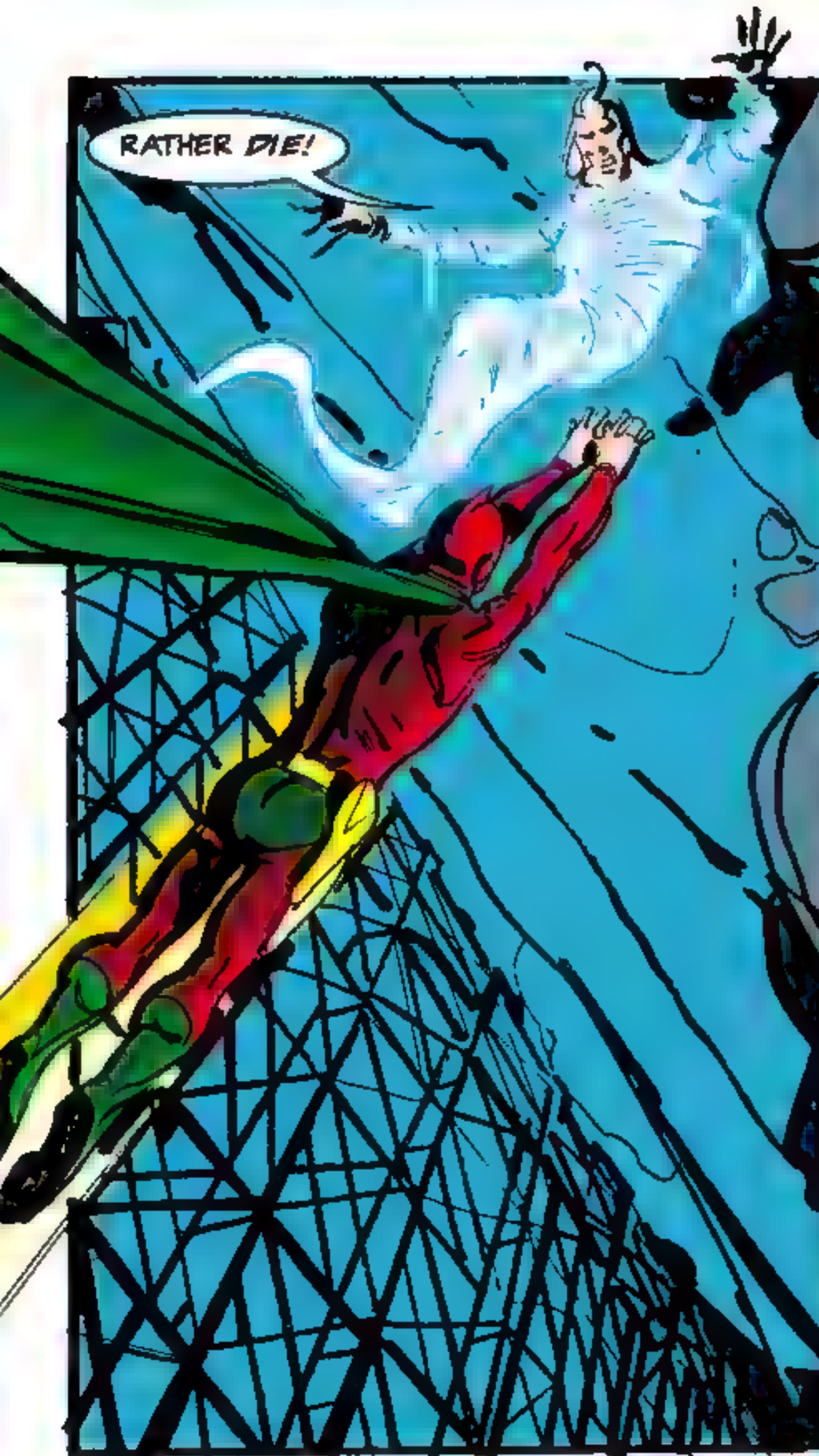


MIST!!

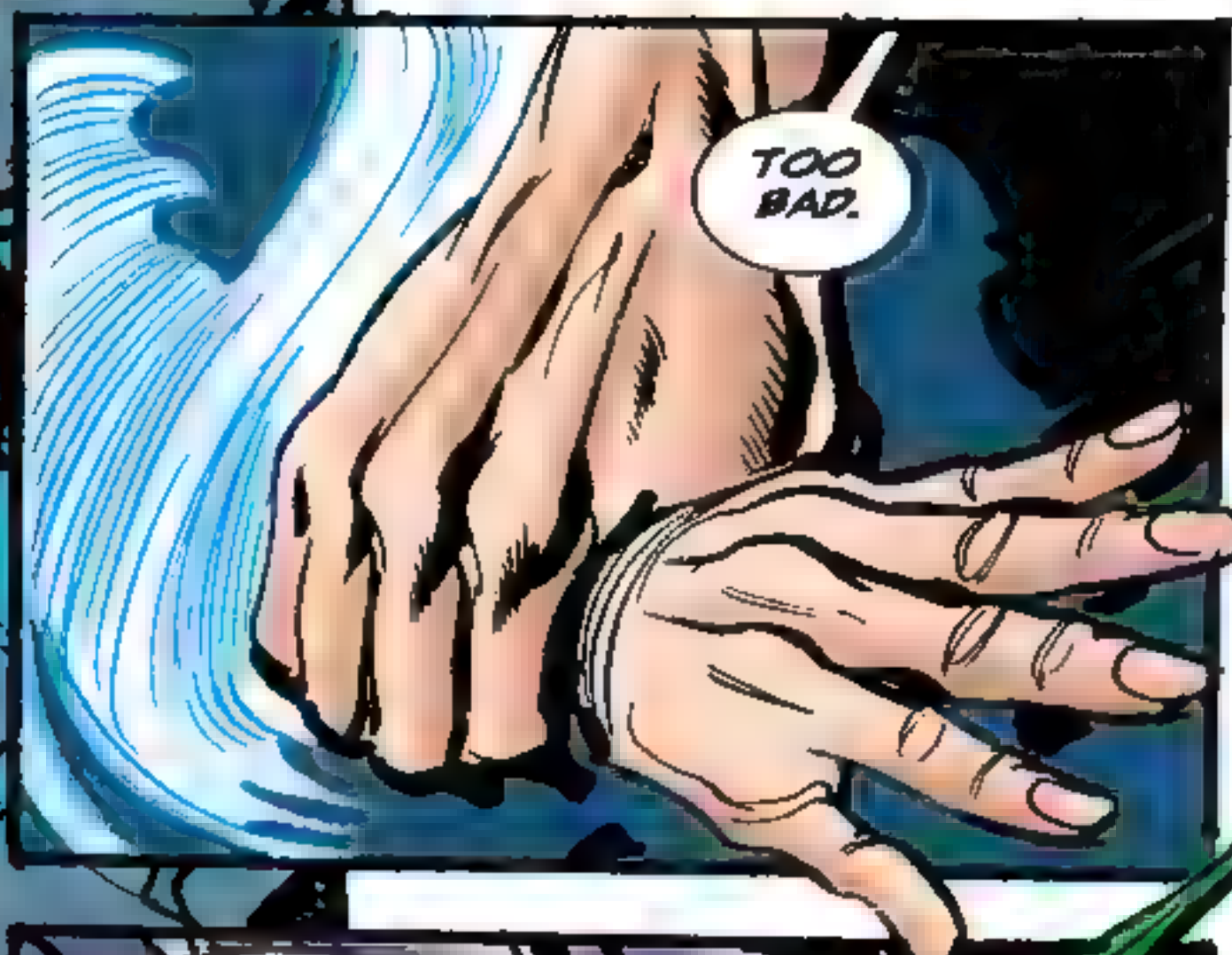


NO!

WON'T BE
SAVED! WON'T
BE
CAUGHT!



RATHER DIE!



TOO BAD.



WHY? WHY DID YOU HAVE TO SAVE ME? WHY DID YOU WANT TO?

I COULD ALMOST ASK YOU THE SAME THING. WHY DIDN'T YOU KILL ME AT THE BANK, WHEN YOU HAD THE CHANCE?



YOU WERE HELPLESS. IT DIDN'T SEEM FAIR.

AND YOU?

I'M A HERO. HEROES DON'T LET THEIR ENEMIES DIE. THAT WOULD BE AS GOOD AS MURDER.

AND VILLAINS DO?



I SHALL REMEMBER THAT FOR NEXT TIME.

The next evening six men gathered

THANKS FOR COMING HERE TO MR. DOONIE'S APARTMENT AT SUCH SHORT NOTICE. I SUMMONED YOU BECAUSE YOU WERE ALL INVOLVED IN SOME SMALL WAY IN THE ADVENTURE. DOONIE, DELANEY AND MAYHEW...THE SMALL BITS OF INFORMATION I GLEANED FROM YOU THREE HELPED ME SOLVE THIS CASE.

BAILEY, YOU WERE A GREAT HELP OF COURSE.

AND YOU, WILSON MAY, UNKNOWINGLY WERE THE CAUSE OF EVERYTHING.

ME? HOW?

GET YOURSELF A DRINK AND I'LL EXPLAIN.

YOU HAVE A MANAGER, VICTOR ROSS.

HAD.

THAT'S RIGHT. HE DIED DURING THE MIST'S BANK RAID. HE LIKED HIS BRANDY, DIDN'T HE? EVERYBODY KNEW IT.

I SUPPOSE. YES. BRANDY, HIS DRINK OF CHOICE.

DO YOU KNOW COLLETT BOYLE?

HE REPRESENTS ARTISTS. HE WANTED TO REPRESENT ME. I TOLD HIM I WAS HAPPY WITH VICTOR.

IT'S NO SECRET THAT YOU ARE DESTINED FOR GREAT THINGS, MAY. IT'S BELIEVED YOU'LL BE ONE OF AMERICA'S PREMIER ARTISTS. VICTOR ROSS KNEW IT TOO. HE WANTED TO GUIDE YOU. STEER YOU.

CONTROL ME? YES, I KNOW HE HAD HIS FAULTS BUT HE WAS THERE FROM THE START. I FELT LOYALTY TO HIM. I WAS GOING TO SPEAK TO HIM ABOUT EASING ON THE REINS THOUGH...THAT I WAS A BIG BOY NOW.



VICTOR SAID NO. HE SAID I WAS ALREADY TOO BIG FOR DOONIE'S GALLERY.

NO OFFENSE, BILL.

DOONIE WANTED TO EXHIBIT YOU.

NONE TAKEN.



AND YOU, DOONIE, OFFERED BOYLE A SMALL BONUS IF HE WOODED WILSON FROM VICTOR ROSS AND ALLOWED WILSON TO EXHIBIT WITH YOU.

YES, I SEE WILSON'S GRAND FUTURE, TOO. I WANTED TO BE A PART OF THAT.

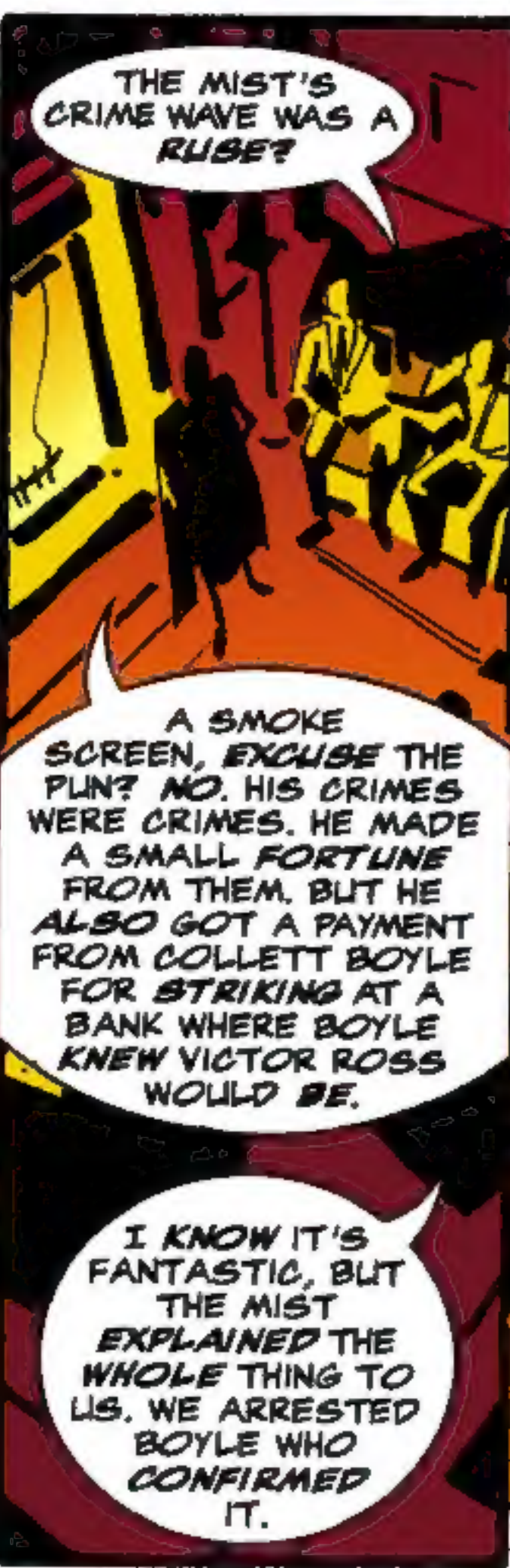
YOU MAY HAVE BEEN THE CATALYST, UNKNOWINGLY. THOUGH PERHAPS BOYLE WOULD HAVE DONE WHAT HE DID ANYWAY. WHO KNOWS WHAT DRIVES SOME MEN?



WHAT HE DID?

HIRE THE MIST, TO CREATE A GAS COMPOUND THAT WOULD BE HARMLESS TO EVERYONE... EXCEPT BRANDY DRINKERS.

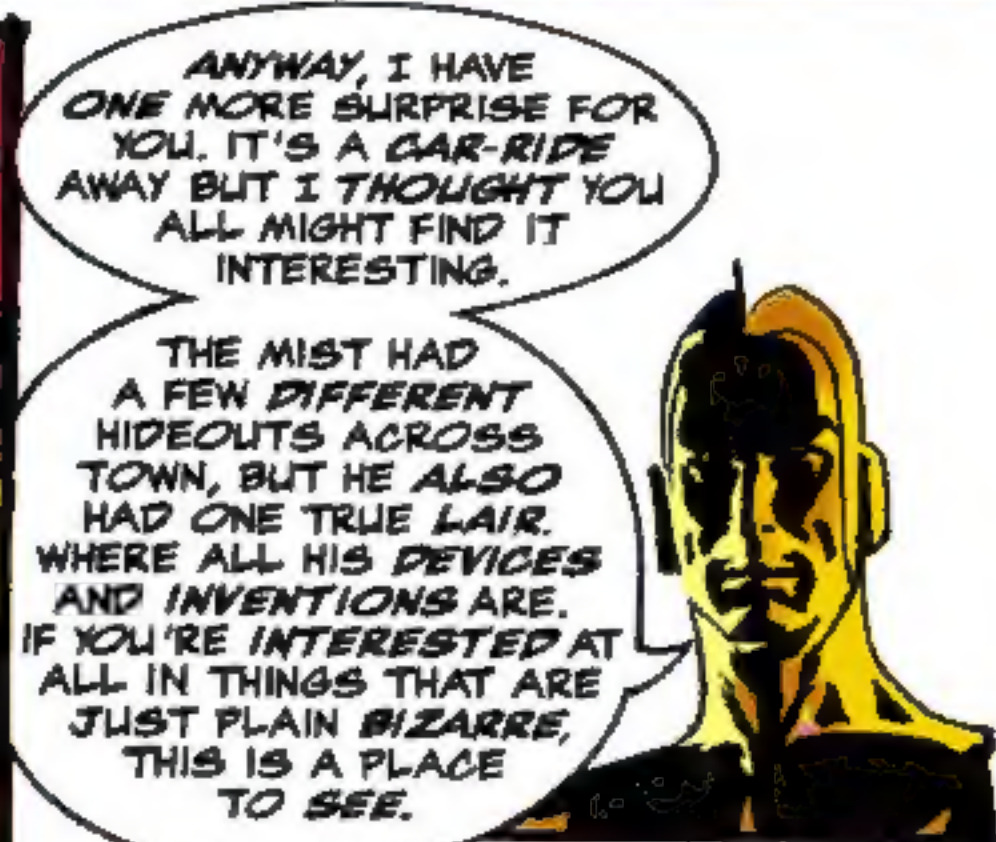
LIKE VICTOR.



THE MIST'S CRIME WAVE WAS A RUSE?

A SMOKE SCREEN, EXCUSE THE PLIN? NO. HIS CRIMES WERE CRIMES. HE MADE A SMALL FORTUNE FROM THEM. BUT HE ALSO GOT A PAYMENT FROM COLLETT BOYLE FOR STRIKING AT A BANK WHERE BOYLE KNEW VICTOR ROSS WOULD BE.

I KNOW IT'S FANTASTIC, BUT THE MIST EXPLAINED THE WHOLE THING TO US. WE ARRESTED BOYLE WHO CONFIRMED IT.



ANYWAY, I HAVE ONE MORE SURPRISE FOR YOU. IT'S A CAR-RIDE AWAY BUT I THOUGHT YOU ALL MIGHT FIND IT INTERESTING.

THE MIST HAD A FEW DIFFERENT HIDEOUTS ACROSS TOWN, BUT HE ALSO HAD ONE TRUE LAIR. WHERE ALL HIS DEVICES AND INVENTIONS ARE. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED AT ALL IN THINGS THAT ARE JUST PLAIN BIZARRE, THIS IS A PLACE TO SEE.



SOUNDS GREAT!

YEAH.

WHEN DO WE LEAVE?



HERE
WE ARE,
GENTLEMEN.

THE LAIR
OF A
MASTERMIND.

*It was their death,
for five of them.*

*More than fifty years later,
true, but stepping into that
cavern, would one day mean
their murders at the hands of
the Mist's daughter.*

Funny.

*The first clash between Starman
and the Mist having such
resonance for so long.*

*Indeed, Funny and sad...how
some things begin...*

*...And how they eventually
end.*

Deadman Wade

"THIS IS WHAT
AWESOME
LOOKS LIKE".

DCP